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Message Text

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S E C R E T ATHENS 3079

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, GR, US
SUBJECT: US-GREEK BASE NEGOTIATIONS: DISCUSSION WITH BITSIOS

REF: ATHENS 3032

1. THIS AFTERNOON, FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM PARIS LAST NIGHT, I HAD A DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS. POLITICAL DIRECTOR GENRAL TZOUNIS WAS ALSO PRESENT.

2.DURING THE COURSE OF OUR COVERASTION I ASKED BITSIOS IF HE HAD RECEIVED REVISED GUDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS FOR THE REEK DELEGATION NEGOTIATING WITH US ON U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES AND BASES IN GREECE. (BITSIOS HAD STATED TO ME THAT HE WOULD TAKE THIS SUBJECT UP WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR APRIL 16-20 TRAVEL TOGETHER AND VISIT TO FRANCE.) BITSIOS SAID THAT HE HAD HAD A DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT WITH CARAMANLIS BUT THATCRAAMANLIS WANTED TO MAKE A MORE DETAILED REVIEW OF THE MATTER PERSONALLY FOLLOWING HIS RETURN TO ATHENS. BISIOS SAID THAT CRAMANLIS WANTED TO MEET WITH BITSIOS, TZOUNIS AND CALOGERAS THIS EVENING; HOWEVER, HE HAD HAD WORD FROM CARAMANLIS THIS MORNING THAT THE MEETING WOULD HAVE TO BE POSTPONED UNTIL TOMORROW, APRIL 22. BITSIOS ASKED ME WHAT REVISED GUDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS HE SHOULD SEEK FROM CARAMANLIS. AS I HAD AGREED EARLIER WITH DCM STEARNS, WHO IS HEADING OUR NEGOTIATING TEAM HERE, I TOLD BITSIOS THAT HE SHOULD OBTAIN AS MUCH
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FLEXIBILITY AS POSSIBLE FROM CARAMANLIS, PARTICULARLY AS

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REGARDS THE FACILITIES AT HELLENIKON.

2. BITSIOS ASKED ME IF THE US SIDE HAD AS YET INFORMED THE GREEK NEGOTIATING TEAM THE DETAILS AND SPECIFICS OF WHAT MINIMUM U.S. REQUIREMENTS WERE AT HELLENIKON. I TOLD HIM THAT WE HAD NOT AND THAT WE WERE STILL AWAITING A REPLY TO OUR INQUIRY OF A WEEK AGO AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THE GOG WOULD AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO THE CONTINUATION OF SOME US FACILITIES AND AN AMERICAN PRESENCE AT HELLENIKON, ALBEIT ON A "GREEK BASE" UNDER A GREEK COMMANDER. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT MY UNDERSTANDING WAS THE GREEK SIDE WAS STATING THAT IT HAD NO AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE WHAT US FACILITIES MIGHT BE AUTHORIZED TO REMAIN AT HELLENIKON BECAUSE THE ORIGINAL GREEK NEGOTIATING INSTRUCTIONS CALLED FOR THE TOTAL TERMINATION OF US OPERATIONS THERE. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT IT WAS HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO THE USG TO MAINTAIN A NUMBER OF ESSENTIAL OPERATING FACILITIES AT HELLENIKON AND THAT THESE WERE ALSO OF HIGH IMPORTANT TO GREECE AND ITS SECURITY, ALTHOUGH I THOUGHT WE COULD GO ALONG WAY TOWARD MEETING THEIR OVERALL OBJECTIVES CONCERNING THE SCOPE OF US ACTIVITIES AND PROFILE AT THE BASE. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT IF THE GREEK NEGOTIATING TEAM WAS AUTHORIZED TO ACCEPT IN PRINCIPLE A CONTINUING AMERICAN PRESENCE THERE AND ALSO HAD A FLEXIBLE NEGOTIATING MANDATE WITH RESPECT TO HELLENIKON, THAT I THOUGHT THE TWO SIDES SHOULD BE ABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT FAIRLY PROMPTLY NOT ONLY ON HELLENIKON, BUT ON OTHER MAJOR ELEMENTS IN THE OVERALL NEGOTIATION.

3. BITSIOS REAFFIRMED THAT CRAMANLIS AND THE GOG DID NOT WANT TO CAUSE EXCESSIVE AND UNNECESSARY PROBLEMS FOR THE USG IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, ALTHOUGH WE HAD TO UNDDERSTAND THAT THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT HAD ITS PROBLEMS WITH RESPECT TO GREEK PUBLIC OPINION. IN ANY CASE, HE, TZOUNIS AND CALOGERAS WOULD DO THEIR UTMOST TO SEE THAT CARAMANLIS MAINTAINED HIS PRIPOSED MEETING WITH THEM TOMORROW, AND HE SAID HE WOULD TRY AND OBTAIN FROM CARAMANLIS THE MAXIMUM DEGREE OF NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY FOR CALOGERAS.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH BITSIOS DID RAISE WITH ME DURING THE COURSE OF OUR MEETING THE MATTER OF THE REMARKS ATRIBUTED

TO VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER (REFTEL) -- AND OTHER MATTERS BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY -- HE DID NOT REFLECT IN THIS CONVERSATION ANY HARDENING OF THE GREEK POSITON IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED REMARKS ABOUT GREECE AND CYPRUS ATTRIBUTED TO THE VICE PRESIDENT. WHETHER CARAMANLIS IS ALSO PREPARED TO TAKE A WISER AND MORE MEASURED ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NEGOTIATIONS, AFTER HIS EARLIER REPORTED IRRITATION WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORTED

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REMARKS, WE SHOULD KNOW BETTER IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO.
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